



## Scituate Light: Better protection needed from storms

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**Wicked Local Scituate**

Posted Nov 29, 2012 @ 06:40 AM

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Scituate — Plans are underway for a new seawall to be built at the lighthouse that will offer better protection from storms to one of Scituate's most beloved historic landmarks.

At the Nov. 20 board of selectmen meeting, Kevin Cafferty, engineering supervisor with the Scituate Department of Public Works, and David Ball, president of the Scituate Historical Society, and a member of the Scituate seawall committee, presented an update on the seawall committee's recommendations to the board.

According to Ball, it is not actually a seawall at the lighthouse location but rather a stone revetment that runs along the ocean side of the parking lot. This revetment was installed in 1989 when the parking lot was re-built.

"There is essentially no effective revetment at all in front of the lighthouse tower," he said.

A revetment used to protect the coastline is in many cases a low sloping structure of loose stones, such as the one at the lighthouse.

Cafferty and Ball both said that every time there is a significant storm, there is damage done to the revetment.

"There is a lot of overflow when there is a storm," Cafferty said. "There are rocks, big rocks, that are moved around the lighthouse."

Ball explained that the revetment does its job in keeping over-wash at the parking lot at bay during

minor to moderate storms.

"Over-wash into the parking lot is a major problem in large storms," he said.

In December 2010 Ball said there was serious damage to the lighthouse due to the lack of any protection.

"There was also serious damage to the lighthouse during the Blizzard of '78 and the 1991 Halloween storm," he said.

Cafferty said that during the 2010 storm "a lot of really big rocks were moved around the lighthouse and a little shack attached to the lighthouse was destroyed."

The plan, Cafferty said, is to raise the height of the revetment for greater protection of the lighthouse and parking area.

He said the revetment has been the same elevation "for years and years."

"The actual height varies in different areas," he said. "It's not perfectly even."

Ball said an engineering firm is recommending that a new revetment be built where the current one is located.

"Right now the engineering company is strongly leaning toward a stone revetment that will be about two to three feet higher," he said. "A seawall would be more expensive due to soil conditions and other factors."

Cafferty said the present revetment, which runs around the lighthouse, would need to be taken down and rebuilt.

"You have to build it up from the bottom, like a pyramid," he said.

He said whatever materials could be salvaged from the existing structure would be put towards building the new one.

Bob Gallagher, keeper of Scituate Light, said the lighthouse is both an economic and a historical asset for the Town of Scituate.

"My experience as a kid growing up in town, and as the lightkeeper, tells me that any threat to the Light has to be met with as thoughtful a response as possible," he said. "The proposed project would enhance the safety of the Lighthouse and cottage, while also keeping the park and jetties as destinations for thousands who visit weekly."

And he reiterated that the number of visitors who go out to the lighthouse is in the thousands each week, no matter what the weather.

The estimated cost for this project is \$575,000.

"This project qualified for CPC funds since the lighthouse is a historic resource and the parking area is heavily used as a recreational resource," Ball said.

He explained that \$475,000 would come from Community Preservation funds that were approved at 2011 annual Town Meeting.

“If the cost comes in above \$475,000, it would be covered by the \$200,000 that is part of the Proposition 2-1/2 override that was voted a few years ago,” he said.

The override divided \$400,000 equally between the roads and seawall repairs.

“We recognize the emergency needs we have to deal with our deteriorating seawalls,” said Selectmen Chairman Joe Norton.

“Funding seawall repair and maintenance is a major priority because seawalls not only protect the homes right along the coast, but the properties behind them, as well as some of our historic landmarks and tourist attractions. We are committed to do as much as we possibly can, and find as much money as we can, to take care of our seawalls.”

The selectmen did not need to approve the project, but did give the seawall committee their support.

Cafferty said the project would be a good size.

“The biggest thing is permitting,” he said.

He and Ball said the anticipated start time for the project would be spring of 2013, and that it would take about eight weeks to complete.

“The suggestion of any other response lacks foresight and does not represent the deep affection townspeople and guests have for the Scituate Lighthouse,” Gallagher said.

Norton echoed Gallagher in noting the significance of Scituate Light.

“The lighthouse is one of the jewels in the crown to Scituate,” he said.

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